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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 002327

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [KJUS](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: WIFE OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER THAKSIN CONVICTED,
SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS' IMPRISONMENT

REF: A. BANGKOK 2243 (THAKSIN PREDICTS UNITY GOVT)
[1](#)B. BANGKOK 2092 (LEGAL TEAM PESSIMISTIC)
[1](#)C. 06 BANGKOK 7594 (SCRAMBLING TO BUILD CASE)

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James F. Entwistle, reason: 1.4
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) A three-judge panel of the Criminal Court on July 31 convicted Potjaman Shinawatra, wife of former Prime Minister Thaksin, on charges of tax evasion and providing false statements to the government. Potjaman's step-brother (Bannapot Damapong) and her secretary (Kanchanapa Honghern) were also convicted. (Ref C provided details of the basis for the tax evasion charge.) Both Potjaman and Bannapot received three-year jail sentences; Kanchanapa received a two-year sentence. They each posted five million Baht (approximately 150,000 USD) for bail and were allowed to leave the court.

[1](#)2. (C) As reported in ref A and B, Thaksin and his legal team had expected a conviction in this case and planned to appeal. In a text message after the verdict, a member of Thaksin's legal team complained to us that the Court had been "highly influenced" (read: by political pressure). Chaturon Chaiseng, former Acting Leader of the Thai Rak Thai party, told us after the ruling that Potjaman's conviction would have important (although currently unclear) political ramifications, and it signaled that further convictions of Thaksin and his wife would ensue.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Thaksin's opponents will surely rejoice in the conviction, the most recent in a series of rulings that show the courts playing the most significant role in marginalizing Thaksin, who still wields considerable political influence through informal mechanisms. So long as Thaksin's most strident foes feel the courts are effectively advancing their agenda, they may be less likely to rely on the street protests that recently helped to forestall some government initiatives, such as constitutional amendment. Thaksin's recent conversation with the Ambassador (ref A) indicated that Thaksin was resigned to legal setbacks and would not necessarily take his fight to the streets.

JOHN